

Littlejohn and Still

"What is osteopathy? It is a scientific knowledge of anatomy and physiology in the hands of a person of intelligence and skill, who can apply that knowledge to the use of man when sick or wounded by strains, shocks, falls, or mechanical derangements or injury of any kind to the body. An up-to-date osteopath must have a masterful knowledge of anatomy and physiology" (A. T. Still)

"What exactly is physiology? It is the applied anatomy of the functioning in the human body".
(J. M. Littlejohn)



The Conflict That Never Was! 'Anatomy versus Physiology'

Chris Campbell and Rob Cartwright

Littlejohn and Still

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THE INSTITUTE OF CLASSICAL OSTEOPATHY

The Institute of Classical Osteopathy (ICO), a registered charity, was established in 1954 by the late John Wernham and T.E. Hall.

Its aims are to:

- Preserve, explore and develop the osteopathic concept and philosophy as formulated by A.T. Still and further interpreted by J.M. Littlejohn.
- Help the postgraduate osteopath gain a deeper understanding of the anatomical and physiological relationship of body mechanics to health and disease and how that knowledge may be applied clinically to enable a precise diagnosis and safe treatment.
- Provide mentored postgraduate training in classical osteopathy in the UK and throughout the world.
- Bring together and support members of the osteopathic profession worldwide who follow a classical approach.

The Institute maintains its role by running the Postgraduate Diploma in Classical Osteopathy course, workshops and conferences to help osteopaths interpret and apply classical osteopathic concepts. and has numerous affiliations with educational groups throughout Europe, Canada and Japan.

The Institute has over the years published a series of academic books, Yearbooks and DVDs – all of which are available for purchase on-line. The next publication is planned for release in 2017 – this being a historically significant year for osteopathy in that it will be 100 years since John Martin Littlejohn founded the British School of Osteopathy and 70 years since his death in 1947.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries regarding classical osteopathy or any of our courses or publications.

For further information and to purchase this and other books please visit the Institute of Classical Osteopathy website at;

www.classical-osteopathy.org

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone who has helped me throughout this project, there too many to mention all individually.

However special mention needs to be made of the A.T. Still Museum, New York Library of Medicine, the National Library of Medicine, Maryland, the British Museum Library and online resources like the Hathi Trust, Archive.org and all my friends and colleagues at the Institute of Classical Osteopathy for all their help and encouragement. I would also like to thank Ben Adams for his support.

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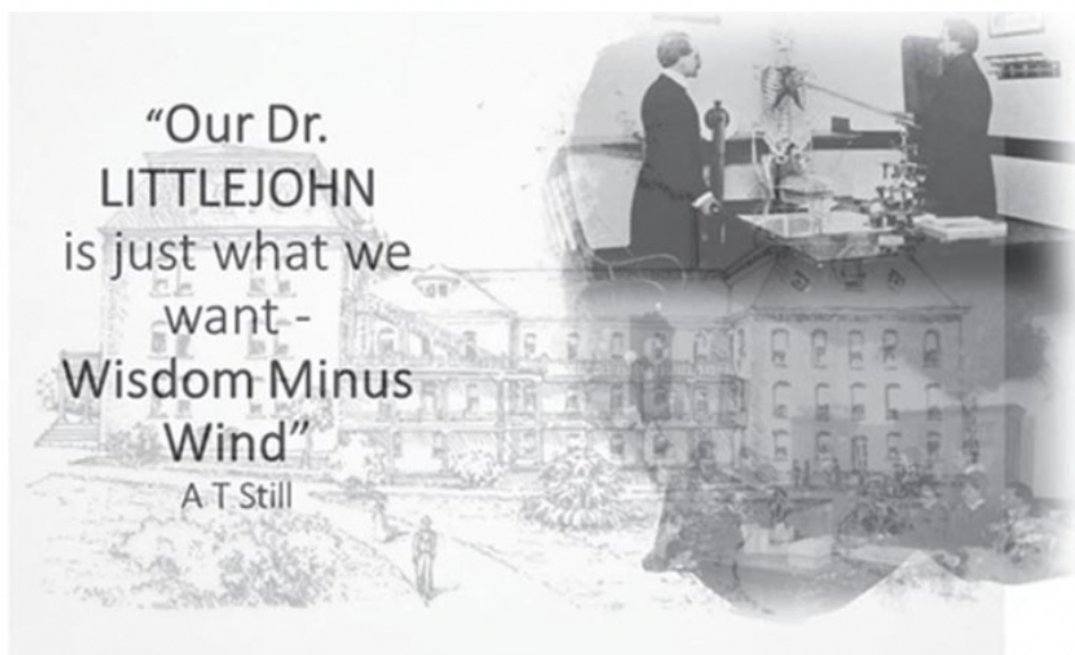
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"Our Dr.
LITTLEJOHN
is just what we
want -
Wisdom Minus
Wind"

A T Still



Memorable Quotes Make a Good Myth



A good physiologist makes a bad
Osteopath



Littlejohn took Osteopathy and dipped it
into a bath of Physiology, and what's more
kept it there

This conflict about anatomy and physiology comes from a number of myths and a good myth needs memorable quotes or sound bites. For example, “*a good physiologist makes a bad osteopath*”, “*Littlejohn took osteopathy and dipped it into a bath of physiology and what’s more kept it there*”. Quotes like these tend to give the impression of a conflict between Littlejohn and Still. A conflict which, I feel, is basically a myth. This booklet endeavours to look at what this supposed conflict was about, how it came into being and expose the reality between the views of Still and Littlejohn. Including how some of the phrases that they’ve used have been taken out of context.

Littlejohn said, “*our view of life is entirely from the physiological side.*” A phrase commonly attributed to Still gives a contrary view, “*the cause of disease is considered from one standpoint that is disease is the result of anatomical abnormalities followed by physiological discord*”. Another famous phrase often quoted by John Wernham (quoting Thomas Edward Hall) “*Littlejohn took osteopathy and dipped it into a bath of physiology*”. This phrase is often contrasted with “*a good physiologist makes a bad osteopath*” which is often attributed to Still, (even though that exact phrase is not found in his writings it seems probable that Still said it or something similar). These phrases or sound bites give the basis of a conflict. Adding to these Littlejohn’s phrase “*physiology is the gateway by which this immense field is to be entered*” contrasted with Still’s much quoted ‘*no physiology*’, the idea of a serious conflict and divergence of views between these two original thinkers in the field of Osteopathy seems self-evident. I have often heard the phrase ‘*no physiology*’ associated with Still bursting into Littlejohn’s lecture on physiology at the American School of Osteopathy, pushing the lecturer out of the way and writing ‘*no physiology*’ on the board.

So, the question is ‘how much truth is there in these quotes?’ The phrase “*physiology is the gateway by*

which this immense field is to be entered” is taken from the introduction in Littlejohn’s book ‘Physiology Exhaustive and Practical’ and he was talking about the mental field, psychotherapy, (psycho-pathy as he called it) and not Osteopathy. He says that “this wide field we believe is open before osteopathy and we think that our claim is not too great when we say in beginning this course of physiology, that physiology is the gateway by which this immense field is to be entered”; he’s talking not about osteopathy but from the osteopathic point of view how to enter or gain an Osteopathic understanding of the field of psychotherapy, psychopathy etc. In his opening paragraph he puts physiology in context when he states “In the beginning of Physiology we must always remember that all Science is one and that there is unity in Science that specialisation cannot dispense with. When we abstract, we tend to narrowness and bigotry.... physiology literally means, from physis and logos, reasoning about nature.”¹

A great source of these myths is unfortunately to be found in Carol Trowbridge’s book on Andrew Taylor Still, an excellent book but in one part of it she says “the Littlejohn/Smith influence irritated Still enough to write a terse note to Harry Bunting in 1899 concerning the improved status of *The Journal of Osteopathy*, but when he stated ‘my school was chartered to teach osteopathy only’” he

*alluded to serious disagreements within the A.S.O. One early osteopath recalls that on several occasions Still closed the school to argue with the staff over the compatibility of medical diagnosis and osteopathy and one student remembered the time Still stormed into a class and fiercely wrote on the blackboard 'no physiology'*². In this one paragraph, all these incidents tend to become linked with Littlejohn and with Still being irritated by the Littlejohn/Smith influence.

However, looking more closely *'the one early osteopath'* recalling on several occasions that Still closed the school to argue with staff over the compatibility of medical diagnosis and osteopathy was H.S. Sullivan. Sullivan was referring to his time in school and he graduated in 1896, well before Littlejohn came to Kirksville. Sullivan then went to Chicago in 1897 to take over Harry Still's practice. It's true that he maintained a good relationship with Still from that time on. His story, and the above quote is based upon his reminiscence of his time with Still and was written after Stills death and clearly refers to his time in school prior to 1896.³

The student who remembered the time *'Still stormed into a class and fiercely wrote on the blackboard 'no physiology''* was Edward C. Pickler and his time in school was much earlier, graduating in 1895. His

reminiscence about Still was written in January 1921⁴. This is what Pickler said in the Journal of the American Osteopathic Association January 1921. *“One day he (Still), came in with fire in his eyes. Picking up a piece of chalk, he walked to the blackboard and wrote two words ‘no physiology’. We were amazed until he told us that physiology was a mass of contradictions and uncertainties, that we’d better not believe any of it unless we could prove it up. He said, “let the piffle and poppycock go.” His attitude was afterwards modified to a certain extent although he often told me that three fourths of it was worse than useless”*. Still was not dismissing physiology, he’s dismissing physiological theories and what Still actually wrote about physiology is very different from this quote. For example, *“By chemistry the truths of physiology are firmly established in the mind of the student of nature... Thus, chemistry of the elementary is one, and physiology is the witness that it is law in man as in all nature”*⁵ .

Regarding the phrase ‘my school was chartered to teach osteopathy only’ which Still used in his note to Harry Bunting, if it is taken in its full context, the true meaning emerges. Bunting, a journalist, who had enrolled as a student, had only just taken over as editor of the Journal of Osteopathy, and the letter was specifically addressed to him. Also, at this time, there were efforts to launch another journal, The

Osteopathic Arena, as an independent, self-financing enterprise. In a letter to Bunting the previous week, 8th February 1899, Still said “*Let it (the Journal of Osteopathy) be edited and published by the American school of Osteopathy only*”⁶. Taking these two letters together, the possible emergence of another journal (which would be a possible competitor), and Bunting’s past in the publishing industry together with his involvement in the new enterprise, the meaning becomes clear. It simply relates to the use of school funds to publish a Journal being a ‘waste of money’.

Still’s full letter to Bunting is as follows:

*“I am better now. The Journal is better now. I had about concluded to drop it out to stop the needless waste of money. My school was chartered to teach osteopathy only. Now it must foot its own expenses or go to the waste basket. I am willing to give it a reasonable time to do so. I think that can be easily done if there is any brains in running it. Do the best you can. Kindly A. T. Still” (Feb 14th, 1899)*⁷

Still underlined the words, my School, emphasizing the fact that it was a school “*chartered to teach osteopathy only*” and that the journal should “*foot its own expenses*”. This would fit with the notes on the publication of a new journal ‘The Osteopathic Arena’ in the January 1899 issue of the Journal of Osteopathy

and the fact that Bunting himself, was involved in the Osteopathic Arena.

“THE OSTEOPATHIC ARENA, a scientific monthly for the profession, is assured. Enough support has been pledged the projectors in the form of subscriptions to warrant undertaking the enterprise”⁸

That phrase again taken out of context, has contributed to the idea of a conflict within the school between Osteopathy and the introduction of medical thinking and puts Littlejohn in the middle of this conflict.

What did Still think of Littlejohn? One beautiful quote in a letter that he wrote to ‘Henry Patty and the Howevers’ sums up Stills impression of Littlejohn. He says, *“Our Dr Littlejohn is just what we want, wisdom minus wind”*. In Still’s opinion Littlejohn was there to teach physiology, he was going to teach it from the Osteopathic point of view, with wisdom and no ‘piffle or poppycock’ in it. You could not get higher praise of Littlejohn from Still than that.

What did Littlejohn think of Still? Littlejohn wasn’t inclined towards making Osteopathy a cult by idolising the founder, A. T. Still. This characteristic of Littlejohn’s makes it difficult to get an objective view of his personal opinion of Still. However, looking at

how he viewed osteopathy we can get an impression of his view of Still. The following quotes are illustrative:

*“Personally, I have ever been loyal to Osteopathy”*⁹ (J M Littlejohn 1911)

*“My slogan is Osteopathy’, and I don’t care who says yea or nay, it is the Osteopathy of A. T. Still “*¹⁰ (J M Littlejohn 1931)

*“Undoubtedly Dr Still was originally a bone setter, he acquired adeptness in setting dislocations and found that as a result of replacement the limbs were restored to normal nutrition. But Dr Still differed from the bone setters in this that he did not stop at the idea of dislocation. This idea suggested to him and his followers a principle namely, that the articulations of the body with free articular mobility, characteristic of every joint in the body, furnishes a basis for healthy and diseased conditions of the body. The body, in other words, is ultimately to be regarded as a perfectly articulated mechanism.”*¹¹ (J M Littlejohn)

*“There is a peculiar sacredness in the science and art of healing”*¹² (J M Littlejohn 1898)

“Dr. A. T. Still, the discover of the new system of healing, founded the American School of Osteopathy as a college for teaching the new diagnostic and curative science. He believed that a God sufficiently wise and powerful to make a human

being was sufficiently wise to exercise forethought and foresight in putting within the body all those principles of vitality necessary for the control of the mechanism and the development of its functions and capacities”,¹³ (J M Littlejohn 1899)

“We must recognise the work of Dr Still was not in reality the discovery of osteopathy but the discovery of a single scientific fact namely. Disease is the result of physiological discord in the functioning of the organs or parts of the physiological laboratory of life.”¹⁴ (J M Littlejohn)

Given his deep reverence for Osteopathy, ‘*The Osteopathy of A. T. Still*’ it would be impossible for Littlejohn to have anything other than deep reverence and respect for Still himself.

¹ Physiology Exhaustive and Practical; A Series of Practical Lectures Delivered from Day to Day by John Martin Littlejohn, Professor of Physiology, In the American School of Osteopathy at Kirksville, MO Especially adapted for Students of Osteopathy, 1898: Introduction

Robert Cartwright

Robert graduated first in class as an osteopath from COET in 1997 and was asked to become



a clinic tutor where he worked part time for 5 years. He graduated as a Naturopath in 1998 and successfully completed a 3 year course in acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine in 2000. Robert left COET in 2002 after being the Clinical Competence examiner for the 5th year students final clinical competence exams and helping the clinic through the General Osteopathic Council recognised qualification.

Robert's journey in classical osteopathy developed after critical self-reflection of his work and he enrolled to train at the Institute of Classical Osteopathy in 2009.

Robert has worked in private practice since 1993 and runs 2 busy osteopathic practices on the south coast, he is the Vice Chairman for the Institute of Classical Osteopathy, does occasional lecturing and presenting webinars, writes the ICO podcast and peer reviews for a manual therapy journal.



The Osteopathic Institute of Applied Technique was established in 1954 by the late John Wernham and T.E. Hall. Its purpose was to bring together in one body, those members of the osteopathic profession who were prepared to interpret and apply osteopathy as it was laid down by early pioneering osteopaths in the US and the UK, most notably A.T. Still and John Martin Littlejohn. John Wernham and T.E. Hall were both students of Littlejohn, who was one of the early students of Still's and become the Dean of the original American School of Osteopathy, as well as establishing his own schools in Chicago and then in the UK.

Chris Campbell

In 1984 Chris moved to England to study Classical Osteopathy at the Maidstone College under the guidance of John Wernham, graduating in 1988.



In 1990 was appointed vice-principal of John Wernham's College also known as the Maidstone College. Former Chairperson of the Institute of Classical Osteopathy, together with John Wernham, he revamped the Institute of Applied Osteopathy and renamed it the Institute of Classical Osteopathy.

He has lectured extensively on osteopathic principles and philosophy, mechanics, treatment of acute disease and treatment of children and pregnancy.

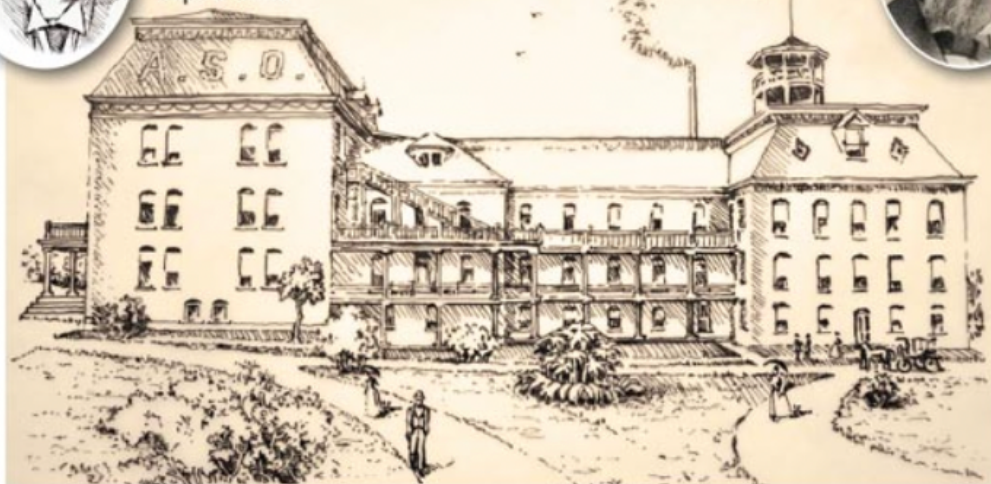
During his time with John Wernham he developed a deep and lasting respect for John Martin Littlejohn and has written two books on Littlejohn's life; *'John Martin Littlejohn - A Clash of Three Cultures'* and *'Discovering John Martin Littlejohn'*, both of which are available from the Institute.

<https://classical-osteopathy.org/shop2/>



Littlejohn took Osteopathy and dipped it into a bath of Physiology, and what's more kept it there

A good physiologist makes a bad Osteopath



The early history and development of ideas and philosophies that have born wonderful fruit often have fabulous folklore stories that accompany this part of their journey. The establishment of Osteopathic education at the American School of Osteopathy is no different and is rich in these stories, some of which true and others a myth.

The disagreement between the founder of Osteopathy, Andrew Taylor Still and one of his early students and professor of Physiology John Martin Littlejohn is probably the most well-known.

Chris Campbell DO, osteopathic historian and leading expert on the life and times of John Martin Littlejohn saw that there were inconsistencies in these stories which have passed down from a variety of the early students like Chinese whispers. With his typical degree of thoroughness, Chris has dug on into these stories to find the truth.

This booklet contains the fascinating story and timeline of the no physiology argument which apparently took place between Still and Littlejohn to help the interested reader to understand the context of the soundbites that are used to perpetuate these myths.




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